

OUTSTANDING

THE AGRICULTURAL WATER USE MEASUREMENT PROGRAM

IN THE FIELD

The background image shows a large center pivot irrigation system with multiple metal arms extending across a lush green field. In the foreground, a large, black, cylindrical flow meter is prominently displayed. The meter has a white face with a scale labeled 'GALLONS PER MINUTE' ranging from 0 to 800. The needle is positioned at approximately 100 gallons per minute. Below the main scale, there is a smaller sub-scale with markings for 0, 0.2, and 0.6. The entire scene is set against a backdrop of trees and a clear sky.

**Why
Metering
Makes Sense
for Georgia
Farmers**

As a result of House Bill 579, the Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission has designed a new program to assist farmers in their measurement of farm water uses – the Agricultural Water Use Measurement Program. Enacted during the 2003 legislative session of the Georgia General Assembly and signed into law on June 4, 2003 by Governor Sonny Perdue, House Bill 579 empowers the Commission with the responsibility of implementing a program of measuring farm water use. The law states the program is necessary "... in order to obtain clear and accurate information on the patterns and amounts of such use, which information is essential to proper management of water resources by the state and useful to farmers for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of their use of water."

The Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission is dedicated to continue helping farmers make the most of their soil and water resources with the Agricultural Water Use Measurement Program. Complementing, not regulating, smart irrigation methods on the farm remains the Commission's goal as we continue our history of partnering with farmers through this program.

OVERVIEW

Agricultural Water Use Measurement Program

Mission:

- Install water meters on the 21,000 existing surface and groundwater systems in a farmer friendly and entrepreneurial manner
- Collect and manage the data recorded by the meters

Goals:

- To provide quality and accurate data on agricultural water use to the state's water policy decision makers
- To provide water use information to producers to assist them in conservation of their water resources

Potential Benefits to the Farmer:

- Conservation of farm water resources
- Reduced pumping costs
- Improved Efficiency
- Crop Diagnostic Tool
- Enhanced Profitability
- New Management Information



**Metering... it's as simple
as 1,2,3.**

2

3

**WANT TO
IMPROVE YOUR
BOTTOM LINE?**

**Conserve your farm
water resources! The
Commission can
show you how.**

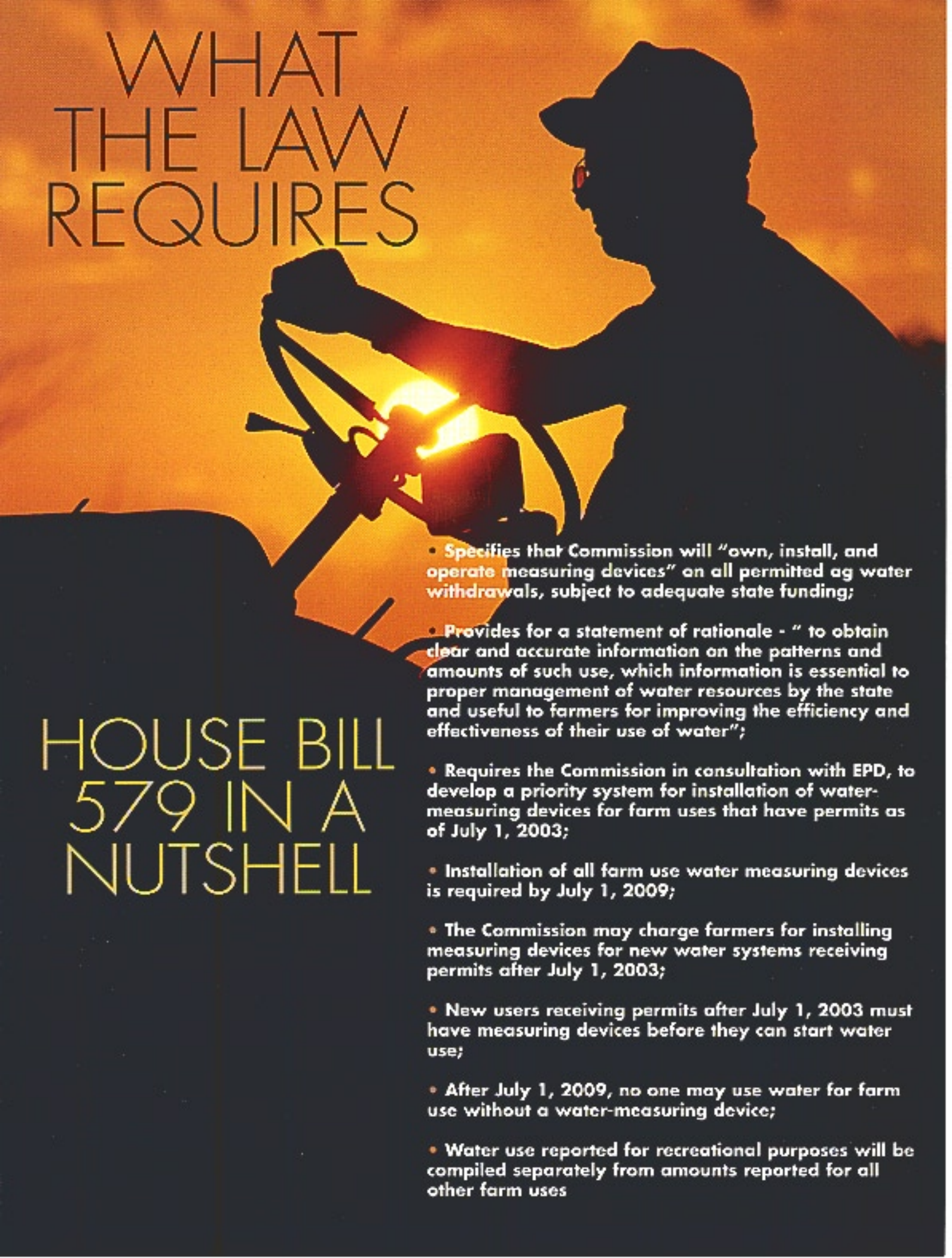
The Georgia General Assembly created the Soil and Water Conservation Commission in 1937 to protect and conserve soil and water resources through 40 Soil and Water Conservation Districts. The Commission and Districts are NOT regulatory or enforcement agencies. Instead, they carry out their mission through research, education, water and land use planning, cost sharing, and technical assistance programs. These programs are designed to support farmers, landowners, local governments, and developers in their implementation of best practices to conserve soil and water.

**KNOW HOW
MUCH YOU
PUMP?**
**Measuring
your irrigation
withdrawals can
give you the man-
agement information
you need to improve
yields and increase
efficiency.**

**HOW DO YOU
INSTALL A
WATER
MEASURING
DEVICE?**

**The Commission will
come to your farm
and install one of its
meters on your
existing permitted
system and maintain
it at no cost to you.**

WHAT THE LAW REQUIRES



HOUSE BILL 579 IN A NUTSHELL

- Specifies that Commission will "own, install, and operate measuring devices" on all permitted ag water withdrawals, subject to adequate state funding;
- Provides for a statement of rationale - "to obtain clear and accurate information on the patterns and amounts of such use, which information is essential to proper management of water resources by the state and useful to farmers for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of their use of water";
- Requires the Commission in consultation with EPD, to develop a priority system for installation of water-measuring devices for farm uses that have permits as of July 1, 2003;
- Installation of all farm use water measuring devices is required by July 1, 2009;
- The Commission may charge farmers for installing measuring devices for new water systems receiving permits after July 1, 2003;
- New users receiving permits after July 1, 2003 must have measuring devices before they can start water use;
- After July 1, 2009, no one may use water for farm use without a water-measuring device;
- Water use reported for recreational purposes will be compiled separately from amounts reported for all other farm uses

Q&A

On Agricultural Water Use Measurement Requirements

Q. Is a farmer required to have a meter on his/her well or surface water pump?

A. HB 579 requires that all irrigation wells and pumps permitted by EPD have a measurement device installed by the Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission by July 1, 2009.

Q. Is a farmer required to have a meter in order to get a permit from EPD?

A. If a farmer already has a permit, the law requires that the Commission install a meter on his/her well or pump by July 1,

2009. A condition of any new permits issued after July 1, 2003 is that a meter must be installed before pumping can begin.

Q. Does the farmer pay for the meter, its installation, operation and maintenance?

A. The law requires that the meters for irrigation systems permitted before July 1, 2003 be purchased, installed and maintained by the State Soil and Water Conservation Commission. Systems permitted after that date may be charged for initial purchase and installation. (There is an exception to the latter for backlogged permit applications submitted to EPD prior to December 31, 2002.)

Q. If the meter quits working, does a farmer have to cease irrigation?

A. No. If the meter ceases to function properly irrigators are asked to notify the Commission immediately at the telephone number located on the meter. The Commission will dispatch someone to repair or replace the meter. Irrigators can and should continue to irrigate their crops.

Q. What information will be collected about farms and irrigation systems under the metering program?

A. Different types of information will be collected for different purposes. The most important information for EPD will be the quantity of annual water use, by river basin or sub-basin. The Commission is most interested in data that will enable the agency to provide irrigators with voluntary water use reduction strategies and other information to help farmers manage their irrigation more efficiently and effectively.

Q. Will farmers get a report about their water usage?

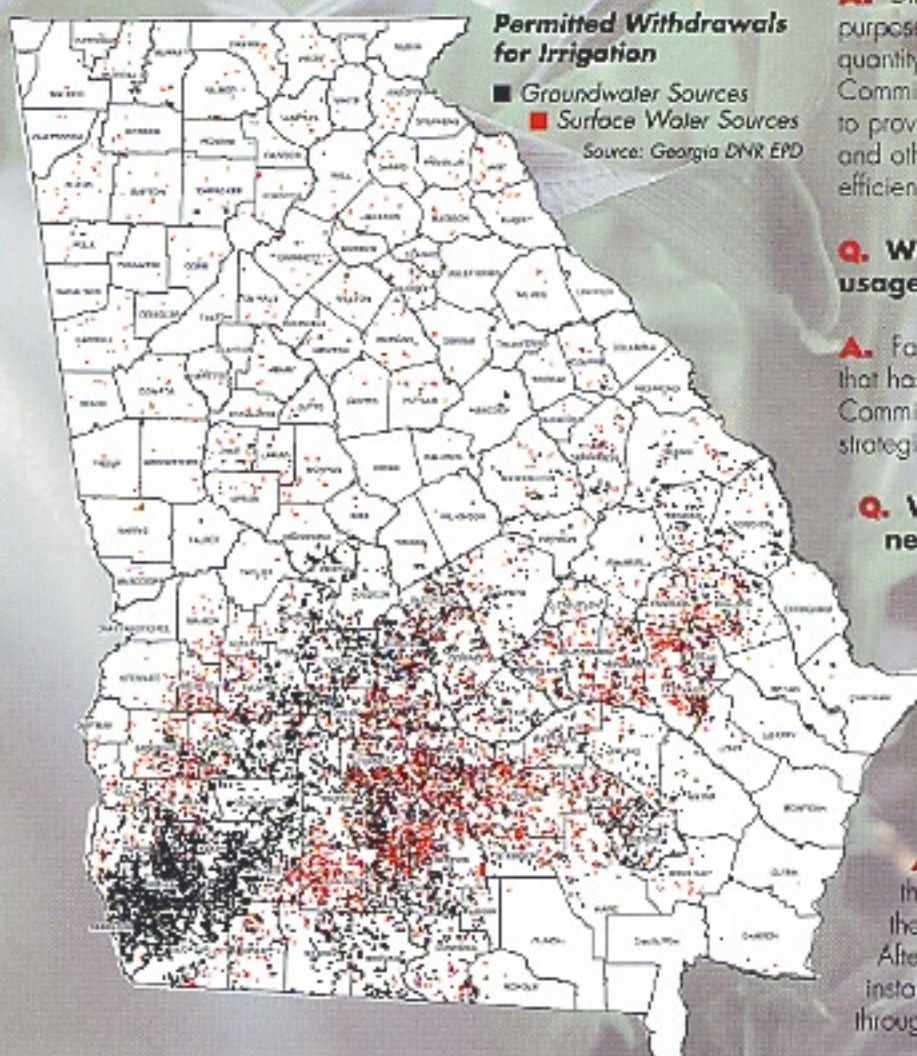
A. Farmers will be issued an annual report of the information that has been collected through the metering program. The Commission will work with farmers to help them plan irrigation strategies based on this information.

Q. Will my water use information be released to newspapers or to the public?

A. Individual farmer's water use will not be released. Any information that is released will be appropriately aggregated so that no individual's water use is identifiable.

Q. When will the program actually start? That is, when will meters be installed?

A. There will be approximately 120 meters installed during the winter of 2003/2004. The initial installations will be in the Ichawaynochaway Creek basin in Southwest Georgia. After this first year, several thousand meters will have to be installed each year in order to complete all of the metering throughout the state by July 1, 2009.





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